

results of our action, and we have been creating jobs in the 11th District of Virginia, providing critically needed transportation improvements to our region and putting our people to work.

I commend my colleagues for their support of this legislation and protecting the interests of all Americans.

EARMARKS IN DEFENSE APPROPRIATION BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FLAKE. Madam Speaker, later today, the Rules Committee will be promulgating a rule for the Defense appropriation bill that I believe we'll consider tomorrow. This is, in my view, quite remarkable that we will be considering the Defense bill that spends hundreds of billions of dollars, we will be spending less than a day debating that legislation.

What is remarkable about it as well is that there are 1,087 earmarks in the bill, more than 1,000 earmarks in the Defense bill that was considered by the full Appropriations Committee for a total of 18 minutes, not 18 minutes per earmark or per section of the bill or anything else, but the full Appropriations Committee considered that bill for 18 minutes, passed, done, markup finished, and now we've got that bill on the floor tomorrow.

And unfortunately, as is the case or as has been the case with the rest of the appropriation bills this season, it will come to the floor under a structured or closed rule where the Rules Committee, the majority party, will determine which amendments the minority party and members of the majority party get to offer. Breaking from tradition that has held for decades and decades and perhaps centuries in this institution where appropriation bills have come to the floor under an open rule, this will come to the floor under a rule that only allows amendments to be offered that the majority party wants to see, not those that the minority party necessarily wants to offer.

There are 548, at our count, earmarks in this bill that will go to private companies. These will be no-bid contracts for private companies. The majority party will say, well, we're inserting language saying that these earmarks have to be bid out. The purpose of an earmark is to ensure that that contract is not bid out. Otherwise, why earmark it? Why not just let the Defense Department decide where to spend its money?

So these are earmarks. These are no-bid contracts. They're going to private companies. In many cases, those private companies will turn around, and the executives from those companies will make sizeable campaign contributions to the Members who secured the earmarks. That has been the pattern in this place for years, not just with the majority party in power but when the minority power was in power as well. It's simply gotten worse over time.

Our Ethics Committee forces Members—and it's a good thing—to sign a certification letter saying that they have no financial stake in the earmark that they are securing, that a family member doesn't work for the firm receiving it, for example. But there's also guidance issued from the Ethics Committee that says that campaign contributions do not necessarily constitute financial interest. And so Members of this body are given a green light to basically earmark for campaign dollars. It's the so-called circular fund-raising that has become the norm around here.

And if this wasn't bad enough, there are investigations swirling outside of this body. Members' offices have been subpoenaed. Some people on the outside have already pled guilty and are working with authorities involving earmarks and campaign contributions. There are allegations of straw men contributions that have been set up where individuals reimburse for contributions they make to Members who secure earmarks. There are all these investigations swirling outside. Yet we're moving through this appropriation process as if nothing were wrong, and we'll consider a bill in one day and limit the number of amendments that Members can bring forward.

Now, this isn't the perfect way to scrutinize or to vet a bill, I recognize, on the House floor. But it's all we've got when the full committee Appropriations Committee takes a full 18 minutes to approve a bill that spends hundreds of millions of dollars and contains over 1,000 earmarks, 548 of which are no-bid contracts to private companies.

We do that all in a day and then tell Members, oh, but we're only going to allow the amendments that we want to see, not necessarily the ones that you want to offer.

In this legislation that we will consider tomorrow, there's an earmark going to a company called ProLogic, and it is reported that this company is under investigation by the FBI. The status of the investigation is unknown. Reports are simply out there that there are investigations. This company, the executives and lobbyists and those associated with it, have contributed more than \$400,000 to congressional campaign committees. Yet we're still allowing this bill to go forward.

Let's have a new rule for the bill.

AMERICA'S AFFORDABLE HEALTH CHOICES ACT OF 2009

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam Speaker, this legislation, America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009, otherwise known as our health bill this year, will guarantee all Americans access to affordable health care without pre-existing condition discrimination.

Imagine that, getting health care insurance without being told that your preexisting condition is going to result in higher premiums, higher deductibles or higher copays. Imagine being able to change your job at will without having to worry that you're going to lose your health insurance. Imagine having no worry that you're going to have to exceed a lifetime cap. Imagine being able to know that you're going to have catastrophic health care coverage.

Imagine knowing that we're going to now move in our health care system from a sick care system that just is the most expensive that we know to actually a health care system where we actually pay for preventive care so that we actually get health care in this country, not sick care; where we pay for prevention, not sick care. We don't have to wait until an asthmatic gets an asthma attack before we get a doctor to that asthma patient. We don't have to wait until a diabetic gets an amputation before we get that critical care. We get prevention and chronic care management.

And what is so great about this legislation is that it includes full parity for mental health coverage. I was proud last year to author the Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act of 2008. What it required is that we finally recognize that mental health and addiction equity is part of our health insurance system, meaning insurance companies can no longer discriminate if you had alcoholism or addiction or depression. Imagine that, we finally acknowledge that the brain is part of the body.

Mental illness is a big part of our country's health care system. It accounts for over 50 percent of the trauma admissions in our trauma one centers and emergency rooms every single weekend. Suicides in our country exceed homicides by two to one, suicides do. And you know what, we don't have a mental health system in this country to speak of because, you know why, there's a stigma out there against mental illness.

We still believe in this country that it's your fault if you have a brain illness. If somehow you have a lower dopamine level or serotonin level, it's your fault. We think you ought to pick yourself up by your boot straps; it's your fault. It's a moral problem.

We forget the fact that now, even to this day, we can take brain scans and tell whether someone has a differing brain or not from a normal functioning brain. But today, we are enforcing what we know to be scientifically true, what the AMA said in 1955, and that alcoholism is a disease, that there is such a thing as brain disorders, substance abuse disorders, eating disorders, depression, bipolar disorder, and things of that nature.

In this legislation, in this health care bill, we require parity in health care coverage. We say that we ought to recognize these disorders for what they are, and furthermore, we say we ought to have prevention. And even more in